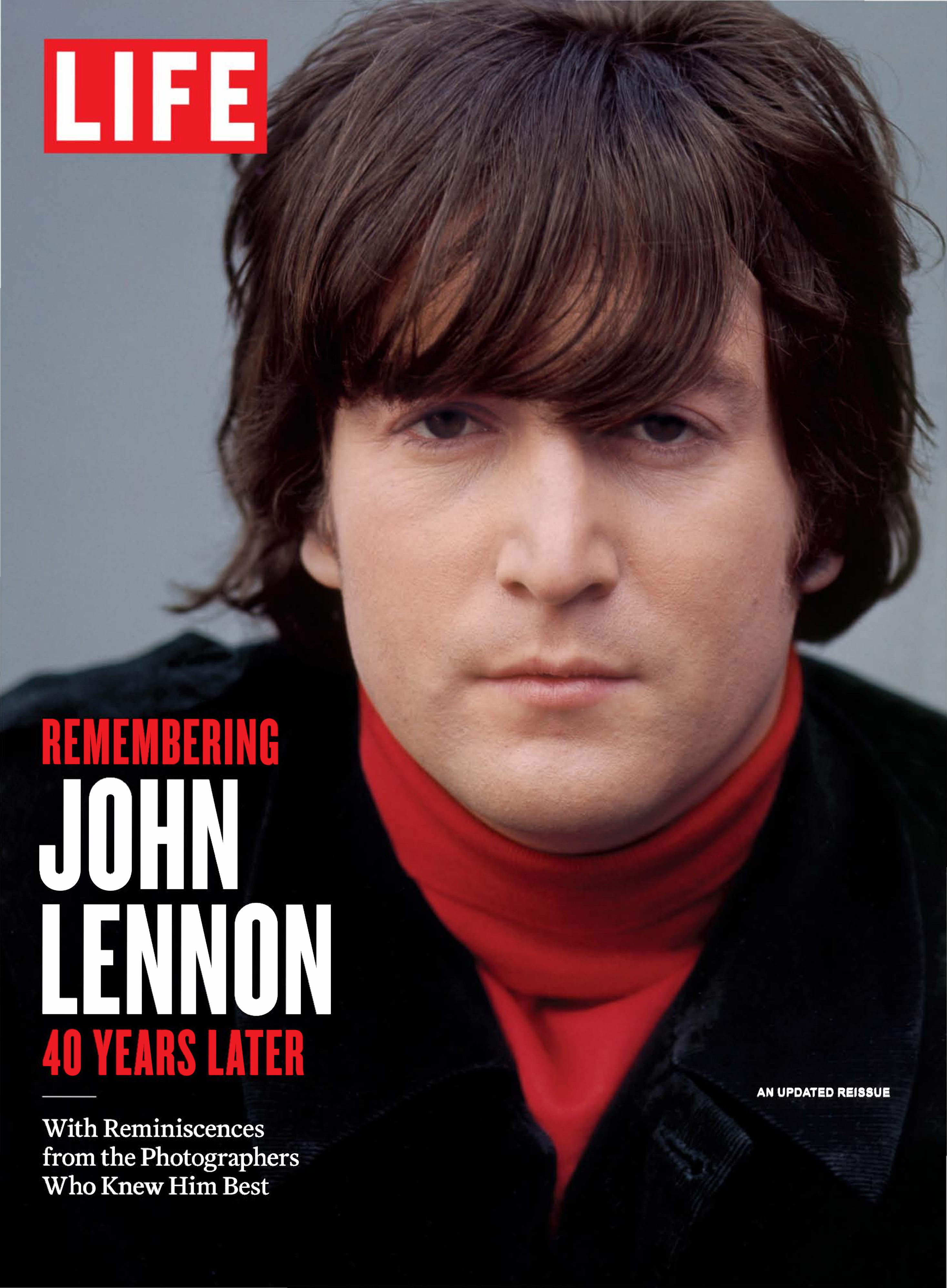




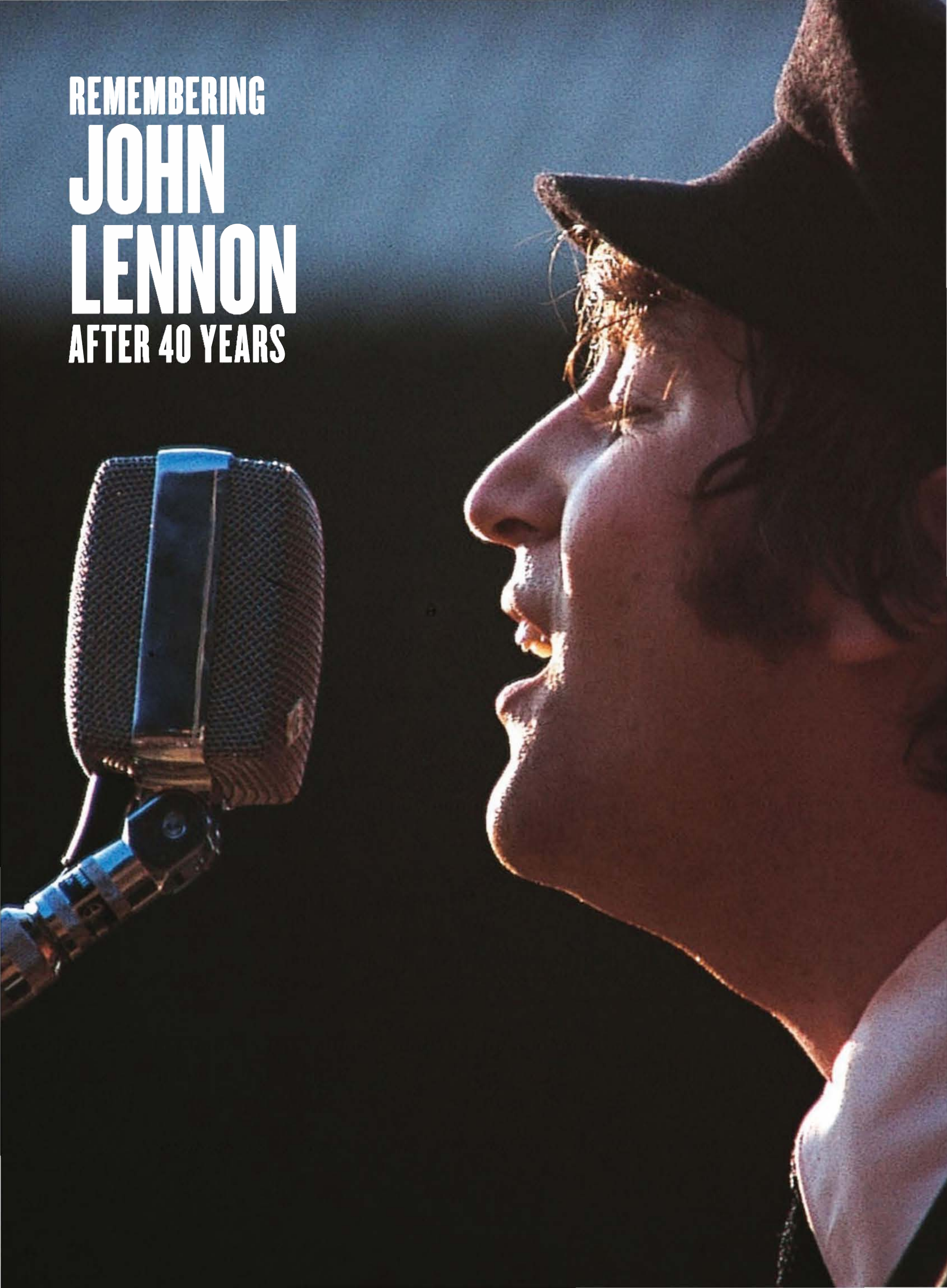
LIFE

REMEMBERING
JOHN
LENNON
40 YEARS LATER

With Reminiscences
from the Photographers
Who Knew Him Best

AN UPDATED REISSUE

REMEMBERING
**JOHN
LENNON**
AFTER 40 YEARS





4	Introduction
6	A Liverpool Lad
12	Astrid Kirchherr Remembers
20	The Fab Four
50	Robert Whitaker Remembers
58	Bob Gruen Remembers
66	John & Yoko
82	Allan Tannenbaum Remembers
88	Harry Benson Remembers
96	Just One More

LIFE

John Lennon

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR Kostya Kennedy
CREATIVE DIRECTOR Gary Stewart
MANAGING EDITOR Robert Sullivan
EDITOR Eileen Daspin
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY Christina Lieberman
ART DIRECTOR Anke Stohlmann/Li'l Robin,
COPY CHIEF Parlan McGaw
WRITER-REPORTERS Daniel S. Levy, Amy Lennard
Goehner, Marilyn Fu
PICTURE EDITOR Sarah Cates, Rachel Hatch (2020)
ASSISTANT PHOTO EDITOR Steph Durante (2020)
PHOTO ASSISTANT Caitlin Powers
PRODUCTION DESIGNER Sandra Jurevics (2020)
PREMEDIA TRAFFICKING SUPERVISOR Tony Jungweber
COLOR QUALITY ANALYST Ben Anderson

MEREDITH PREMIUM PUBLISHING

VICE PRESIDENT & GROUP PUBLISHER Scott Mortimer
VICE PRESIDENT, GROUP EDITORIAL DIRECTOR Stephen Orr
VICE PRESIDENT, MARKETING Jeremy Biloan
DIRECTOR, BRAND MARKETING Jean Kennedy
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, BRAND MARKETING Bryan Christian
SENIOR BRAND MANAGER Katherine Barnett

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR Kostya Kennedy
CREATIVE DIRECTOR Gary Stewart
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY Christina Lieberman
EDITORIAL OPERATIONS DIRECTOR Jamie Roth Major
MANAGER, EDITORIAL OPERATIONS Gina Scauzillo

SPECIAL THANKS Brad Beatson, Samantha Lebofsky,
Kate Roncinske, Laura Villano

MEREDITH NATIONAL MEDIA GROUP

PRESIDENT, MEREDITH MAGAZINES Doug Olson
PRESIDENT, CONSUMER PRODUCTS Tom Witschi
PRESIDENT, CHIEF DIGITAL OFFICER Catherine Levene
CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER Michael Brownstein
CHIEF MARKETING & DATA OFFICER Alysia Borsa
MARKETING & INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS Nancy Weber

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENTS

CONSUMER REVENUE Andy Wilson
CORPORATE SALES Brian Kightlinger
RESEARCH SOLUTIONS Britta Cleveland
STRATEGIC SOURCING, NEWSSTAND, PRODUCTION
Chuck Howell
DIGITAL SALES Marla Newman
THE FOUNDRY Matt Petersen
PRODUCT & TECHNOLOGY Justin Law

VICE PRESIDENTS

FINANCE Chris Susil
BUSINESS PLANNING & ANALYSIS Rob Silverstone
CONSUMER MARKETING Steve Crowe
BRAND LICENSING Toye Cody and Sondra Newkirk
CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS Jill Davison

VICE PRESIDENT, GROUP EDITORIAL DIRECTOR Stephen Orr
DIRECTOR, EDITORIAL OPERATIONS & FINANCE Greg Kayko

MEREDITH CORPORATION

PRESIDENT & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER Tom Harty
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER Jason Frierott
CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER John Zieser
CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER Daphne Kwon
PRESIDENT, MEREDITH LOCAL MEDIA GROUP Patrick McCreery
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES
Dina Nathanson

CHAIRMAN Stephen M. Lacy
VICE CHAIRMAN Mell Meredith Frazier



Copyright © 2015, 2020 Meredith Corporation
225 Liberty Street • New York, NY 10281

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer, who may quote brief passages in a review.

For syndication requests or international licensing requests, e-mail syndication@meredith.com.

PRINTED IN THE USA

LIFE is a registered trademark in the U.S. and other countries.

FRONT COVER: London, 1965. PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT WHITAKER

BACK COVER: PHOTOGRAPH BY BOB GRUEN

PAGE 1: The sailor cap John Lennon wore in the mid-1960s was a sign of Bob Dylan's influence. PHOTOGRAPH BY JEAN MARIE PERIER/PHOTO 12/POLARIS

THESE PAGES: John during a Beatles concert in October 1963. PHOTOGRAPH FROM KEYSTONE/POLARIS

The Opening Act



GETTY

Rock 'n' roll was born kickin' and screamin' in America in the 1950s, as revolutionary sounds from Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly, the Everlys, Bo Diddley, Eddie Cochran, Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard, Elvis Presley and others commandeered the airwaves and blared defiantly from jukeboxes. Young people thrilled to a beat all their own, and kids in other parts of the world dug the music too—and sometimes even tried to play it. But the only tunes that mattered—that were the real deal—came from the States.

The new music found an eager audience in Britain, as a dreary post-war climate left disenfranchised teenagers wanting something—anything—that was different. A lot of them keyed in to the American scene, and a few were ready and willing to pattern themselves after the American acts. But if they were ready and willing, these performers were not so able, at least from a Yankee perspective. The likes of Tommy Steele and Cliff Richard were popular in the U.K., but to Americans, the few who heard them at all, these Brits were nothing more than wannabes. They lacked originality, and the true rock feel.

Luckily for the future of rock 'n' roll, there were others than Steele and Richard who were listening to the music. One of them was a bright if directionless boy in Liverpool who came alive at age 15 when he heard a recording by Elvis. Empowered, John Lennon, a middle-class child of

THE FAB THREE: Young performers George Harrison, John Lennon and Paul McCartney stand outside McCartney's Forthlin Road home in Liverpool, England. In the spring and summer of 1960, the musicians come together and cut

some of their first recordings in McCartney's house, with tracks including "Matchbox," "Hello Little Girl" and "One After 909." Some sources report that the recordings are made in McCartney's bathroom and dub

them "The Bathroom Tapes." Drummer Ringo Starr does not join the group until two years later. The pensive portrait of John at right is taken just weeks before his death in New York City, in December 1980.

confusion from Liverpool, formed a band, and therein took hold of himself. Before too long another young Liverpudlian, Paul McCartney, joined with him, and these anxious teenagers set about learning their craft.

By the early 1960s, though rock 'n' roll still ruled the musical roost, the lifeblood had been drained from the medium. Elvis had gone into the service, then had returned a little too grown-up, and more than a little too Hollywood. Chuck and Jerry Lee got entangled in scandals that took them out of the mix, and Little Richard, of all people, chose to devote himself to the spiritual rather than the secular. Rock, such as it was, had become the purview of white-bread teen idols, bland performers lip-synching bland numbers. Frankly, it seemed all was lost. But as we now know, this was not the case. Things were heating up in Merrie Olde England.

The fine American R&B singer Delbert McClinton was on the scene at the time, and tells LIFE, "In April 1962, about a year before the Beatles changed the world, I was playing harmonica with Bruce Channel—who had a hit at the time with 'Hey Baby'—at the Tower Ballroom in New Brighton. The Beatles were the opening act, and John Lennon came up to me and asked if I used a chromatic harp on 'Hey Baby.' We hit it off, and he came to the show we did in Liverpool and again in London, where he took me to an after-hours joint. We were both 22 years old and both had big plans to make our marks in life. John Lennon was the most charismatic person I had ever met."

Delbert is right: John defined charisma, and the Beatles did change the world. The music of the Fab Four swept over the globe like a wondrous tornado. Although it incorporated Elvis and Buddy and Chuck and the others, it was different from

anything that had come before, and these particular Brits definitely had the real feel.

Of course, it was more than the music. When young people around the world got a look at the Fab Four, at their hair and clothing and the instinctively entertaining way they handled themselves, it was the beginning of a cultural sway unlike anything pop music had ever witnessed. John was the leader, although eventually the magnitude of the Beatles diffused any notion of a front man. They simply were, and young people everywhere followed them with rapture.

By 1970 the fury of the group proved too much, and the band's members went their own ways. It wasn't a pretty parting; the blinding pressures of interstellar popularity—even worship—would have undone any mortal team. By this time, John was completely taken with Yoko Ono, an avant-garde performance artist he

had met in London in 1966. John was a tough guy, at least on the outside, but he had met his match in Yoko. Together the two would lead a life alternately public and private, but nearly always together.

So it would remain until the end, an ending that was simply all too unfair. John's life for years had been devoted to nonviolence, and an unhappy person needed but a gun to take him from us. Fortunately we have our memories. There are the songs and the movies, and with this book a collection of pictures that will forever crystallize one of our greatest artists. Of special note are the sections devoted to five photographers who were there at critical times with the man, helping immortalize the one and only John Lennon. These individuals speak to us, exclusively, in these pages, thinking back to a wondrous time. Their pictures speak to us too—and ever will.



ALLAN TANNENBAUM / POLARIS

A Liverpool Lad

After an aimless boyhood, John discovers meaning and direction in the music of Elvis Presley.





October 9, 1940. Bombs are falling on Britain as Germany is trying to blast the little nation into submission. Liverpool, an important port city in the northwest part of the country, is taking a particularly hard pounding.

On this day, during a brief lull in the bombardment, a child is born at the Oxford Street Maternity Hospital. His name is John Winston Lennon.

John's father, Alfred, is away at sea, and will never have much of a part in his son's life. The mother, Julia, is temperamental, ill-prepared for raising a son on her own, and frankly not that interested in the job. However, Julia's sister Mary Smith, better known as Mimi, is a different matter. She adores the boy; it is she who chooses his name. With Julia out and about, Mimi and her husband, George, raise young John, who, desperate for attention, often runs the three miles from his home to their place in suburbia. When John turns five years old, he finally moves in with the couple.

Mimi is loving, but she is also strict. Julia, on the other hand, now relieved of any disciplinary responsibilities, becomes a kind of carefree friend to her son. She sees him fairly

regularly, and in time she teaches him to play the banjo. John, understandably, develops complex feelings toward her that will haunt him after she is killed by a drunken driver when John is 17.

Going to school becomes a problem. John skips classes and often gets in trouble. Aunt Mimi arranges for him to get into the Liverpool College of Art, but even this proves too regimented for him.

The lad is foundering, but there comes a ray of light. In May 1956, a friend plays Elvis Presley's "Heartbreak Hotel" for John. At long last a jolt of energy shoots through the young man. Here is something that calls out to him... takes hold of him... a feeling... something that is on his wavelength... something that shakes a lad who has been wandering in a daydream and is made to feel, at once, alive. Relentlessly he begs Mimi to buy him a guitar. She does, saying, "The guitar's very well, John, but you'll never make a living out of it."

This is hardly the sort of advice that sways a besotted teenager, especially one as strong-willed as John. Guitar in hand, he forms a band called the Quarry Men. They aren't very good, not at first, but lord knows, the lead Quarry Man has quite a future ahead.

"THERE ARE PLACES I'LL REMEMBER..."

Prior pages: John, circa 1948, when he is enrolled in the Dovedale school. He sometimes takes a three mile bus ride to get to Dovedale, changing at a terminus called Penny Lane. Above, John (with arms spread) frolics on a school trip to the Isle of Man in the Irish Sea. At school, he is energetic, strong-willed and smart, though definitely not a bookworm.



BELOVED WOMEN

John poses with his mother, Julia Stanley Lennon, in 1948. His father, Alfred Lennon, is largely absent and Julia and her sister Mimi are two of the most important people in John's life. In a 1975 interview with *Playboy*,

John says, "There were five women who were my family. Five strong, intelligent women. Five sisters. One happened to be my mother. My mother was the youngest. She just couldn't deal with life . . . Those women were fantastic." Even though

John moves in with Mimi and her husband when he is five, he continues to see his mum. She teaches him to play the banjo, helping spur his passion for music. John later writes two haunting songs about her, "Julia" and "Mother."





THE QUARRY MEN

John is inspired by Elvis Presley's "Heartbreak Hotel" but he forms a singing group with some school friends because of skiffle, a musical form that is part pop, part jug band. The sound spawns a craze of teenage boys who want bands of their own and John and his mates dub theirs the Quarry Men, after their high school. At left, the Quarry Men are shown performing on a makeshift stage in Liverpool on July 6, 1957. On the day this picture is taken, there is a 15-year-old in the audience who is very taken with the group, and soon joins its ranks. His name is Paul McCartney. Below: During the festival, 16-year-old John shows off his skills as the Quarry Men's lead singer. By 1960, the group evolves into the Beatles.



GLOBE/ZUMA

ROD DAVIS/WHITEHOTPIX/ZUMA

Astrid Kirchherr Remembers

A young German photographer captures the original band members during their early days in Hamburg.



MAX SCHELER/K&K/REDFERNS/GETTY

“All they had were little snapshots from home, so I took them to the fairground and posed them. They were perfect for my black-and-white photography, and with their leather rock ‘n’ roll-boys look, the rusted-steel lorries out there were suited to their image. They had never really posed, so I had to touch their legs and put them the way I wanted them.”

Everyone wanted to take pictures of the Beatles and, later, John and Yoko. But a few photographers were there at critical moments, and gained an intimacy that allows their portfolios to stand, all these years later, as the definitive telling of those chapters. They also are key to how we remember John Lennon.

Five seminal chroniclers of Lennon’s life—the late Astrid Kirchherr and Robert Whitaker; Bob Gruen; Allan Tannenbaum; and Harry Benson—talked, in 2005, upon the 65th anniversary of Lennon’s birth and the 25th commemoration of his passing, with LIFE’s Robert Sullivan. Their reminiscences remain insightful, poignant, sometimes sentimental—and often fun.

In 1960, Kirchherr (who died in 2020) was an up-and-coming photographer based in Hamburg when she was introduced by her boyfriend, Klaus Voorman, to this British quintet, the Beatles (from left, Pete Best, George, John, Paul and Stu Sutcliffe; opposite, George, Stu and John; above, Astrid with Ringo and John in 1963). “We were so amazed by their looks and music,” she said. “They

were jumping around with joy, asking questions about everything.” John got a kick out of the band’s ultrahip German fans the *Exis*, existentialists, and a mutual admiration society soon formed. Astrid and Stu fell in love, and when the band returned home after another stint in Hamburg in 1961, Sutcliffe stayed. He died of a brain hemorrhage in 1962.



ASTRID KIRCHHERR/© GINZBURG FINE ARTS (2)



Astrid Kirchherr Remembers



ASTRID KIRCHHERR/© GINZBURG FINE ARTS (2)

“I felt that John was a sad person. He looked like a hard teddy boy, but he wasn’t at all—he was a very soft, gentle person. He was lovely and honest, especially when Stuart [right, in background] died. He asked me to take his picture then in Stuart’s studio [above]. He said a typical John thing—‘If you want to die, do that. But if you want to live, get on with it.’ He was a very honest friend, and that is why I loved him so much.”





Astrid Kirchherr Remembers

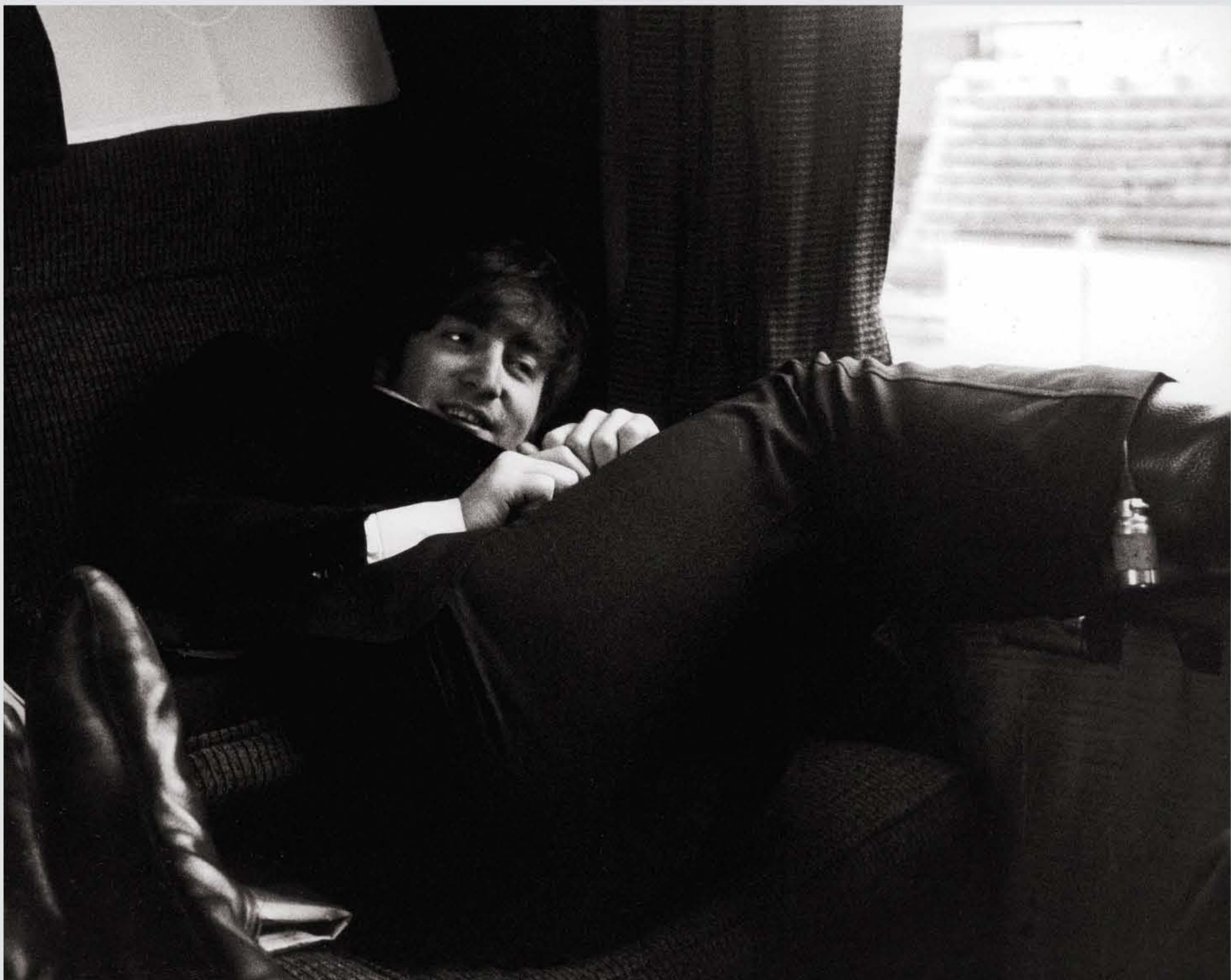


ASTRID KIRCHHERR/© GINZBURG FINE ARTS (2)

“The Beatles were the first English people I met, and you must remember, this was not long after the war. We all learned that these other people were not the enemies we believed they were. We listened to one another. Yes, I gave Stuart the haircut first—John made fun of it. But soon he wanted one, too, and so did the others. The same haircuts or not, each of them was strongly an individual. I could tell right away.”



Astrid Kirchherr Remembers



ASTRID KIRCHHERR/© GINZBURG FINE ARTS (5)



“When it all took off in England, well, nobody could expect that sort of thing. But I did always feel that each one of them was going to succeed at something—Paul as a musician, John as a writer or cartoonist or whatever, Stuart as an actor or writer or painter. And then the Beatles happened for the four of them. At first, it still all seemed very innocent and actually pretty funny.”



“John’s legacy? His bravery. When he had the power, he used it. He really wanted peace on earth, and John’s lyrics—well, that’s the brave poetry of the ’60s. If he had stayed with us, he could have done so much more.”



The Fab Four

The Quarry Men become the Beatles, who in 1963, produce their first No. 1 hit. Fame isn't far behind.



IT'S EVOLUTION

In their early gigs, the Quarry Men are a changing cast of characters, with members that include John, Paul and, soon, George Harrison. They perform in local clubs, but once the band becomes the Beatles, their audience grows considerably—especially after they appear on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in 1964. Previous page: The Beatles take the plunge in Miami Beach that same year.

July 6, 1957. The Quarry Men are signed to play a garden fete. It's a big deal for them, and bassist Ivan Vaughan invites a friend named Paul McCartney to the show. During a break John and Paul meet. They are quite different chaps, but they have a few things in common, one being a shared passion for music. Paul impresses John with his singing. What's more, Paul can tune a guitar, something that has thus far eluded John. Two weeks later, Paul becomes a Quarry Man.

The band continues to hone its skills, occasionally even in public. Before long another boy begins hanging around. He is a bit younger, and thinks the Quarry Men are the greatest. Eventually they let him play with them, not least because he knows a lot of chords. The boy ends up staying. His name is George Harrison.

The Quarry Men go by different names. One of them, a tribute to Buddy Holly and the Crickets, is the Silver Beatles. John changes the name to an a to play off the idea of a Beat group. By 1960 they are beginning to turn a few heads. Not many, but a few. One interested party is businessman and promoter Allan Williams, who books the band—now with John, Paul, George, Pete Best on drums and

John's art-school friend Stu Sutcliffe on bass—to play in Hamburg. The conditions they live and work in are primitive, but the experience whets their playing to a keen edge, even as their "look" is altered by local photographer Astrid Kirchherr. It is a vital period to the band. John later comments, "I was raised in Liverpool, but I grew up in Hamburg."

In mid-'61, they are in Liverpool, but without Sutcliffe, who is engaged to marry Kirchherr. Playing at an underground joint called the Cavern Club, the Beatles, as they are now called, are a tight, exciting quartet featuring John as a formidable lead singer. Kids eagerly queue up for every show.

A 27-year-old Brian Epstein, who runs a music store, catches the band's act and senses the buzz. Epstein becomes their manager and is able to secure a recording session, but with an edict from producer George Martin that Pete Best be replaced on drums by a fellow Englishman the band got to know in Hamburg, one Ringo Starr.

The die is cast. Fame and fortune are drawing nigh, and four young men from the tough port city are soon awash in the bittersweet nectar that flows from the font of extreme fame. The world will soon meet the Beatles.

KEN REGAN/CAMERA 5



THE LIVERPOOL SCENE

At right, a close-up of Paul and John playing at their regular Liverpool stomping grounds, the Cavern Club. The venue launches as a jazz-only spot, but evolves over time to include other types of music; it eventually becomes one of the most famous clubs in Britain. Below, the lads sing, and, bottom, Paul, John and a pal—with John's wife, Cynthia—mug for the camera.



MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY



MANCHESTER DAILY EXPRESS/SSPL/GETTY



KEYSTONE PRESS/ZUMA

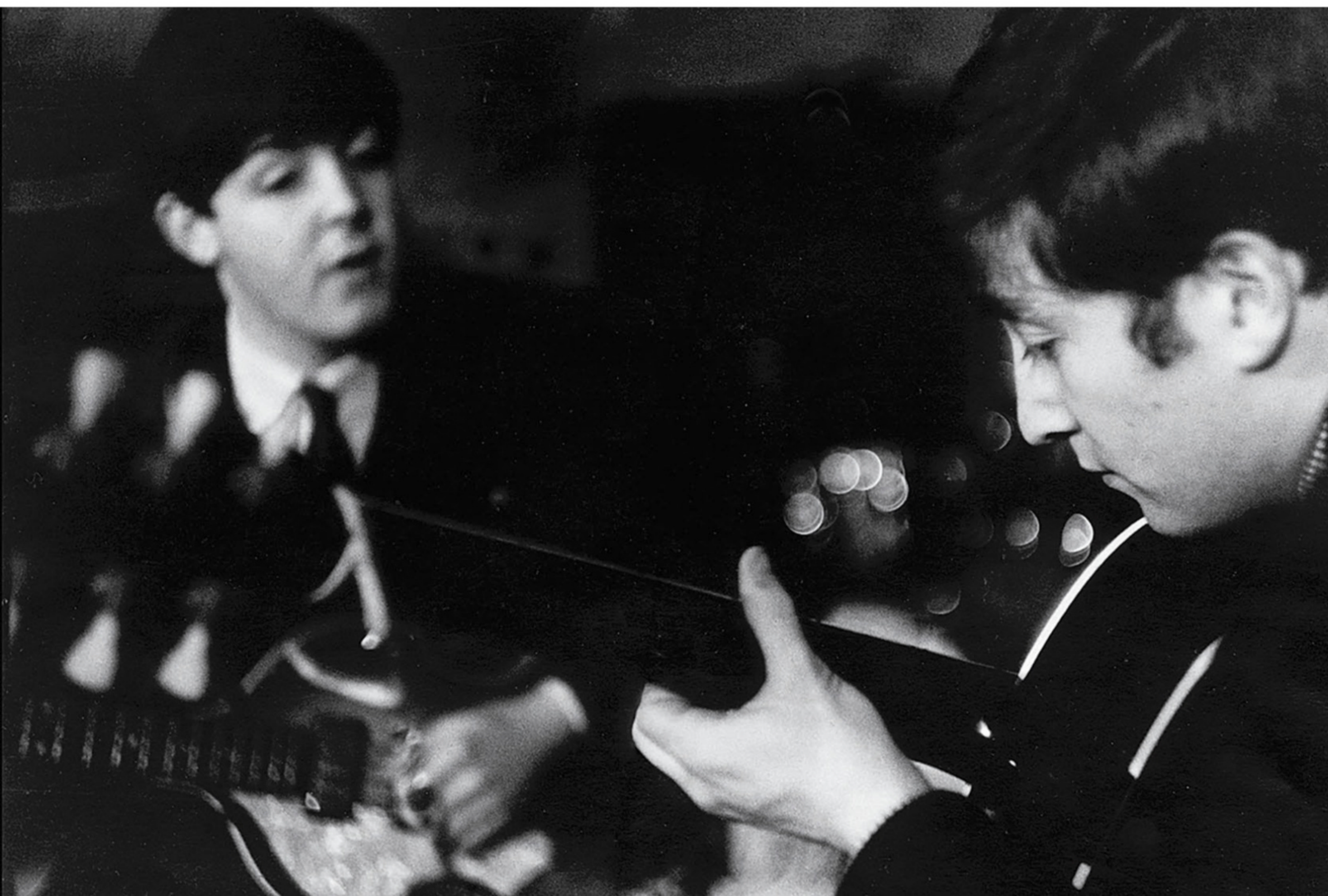




ON THE CUSP

These photographs, all taken at the Cavern on the night of February 19, 1963, capture the club's subterranean ambiance. Three days later, the Beatles receive a bit of sensational news: their single "Please Please Me," which was released in Britain on January 11, has reached the No. 1 spot on the *New Musical Express* chart.

MICHAEL WARD/PREMIUM/GETTY (3)



THE INVASION

It is February 7, 1964, and Pan Am Flight 101 from London has just arrived at Kennedy Airport in New York City. The invasion is in full force: The Beatles have the No. 1 song in the U.S. with "I Want to Hold Your Hand," and a frenzy is developing. Girls scream for them, but boys love their music too.



HULTON/GETTY



CURT GUNTHER/MPTVIMAGES







A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

Two days after landing, the Beatles draw a record number of viewers when they appear on Ed Sullivan's Sunday evening TV show. The crowd shrieks in ecstasy as the boys perform a few of their current hits. Above, Sullivan and John mug it up. At right, Brian Epstein and John, Ringo and Paul look on as Sullivan comes to grips with Paul's bass. Opposite, in rehearsal.





PHOTOGRAPH BY BILL EPPRIDGE © ESTATE OF BILL EPPRIDGE (2)



A VEDDY BRIEF TOUR OF THE COLONIES

Opposite: While in New York for *The Ed Sullivan Show*, Ringo, John and Paul get to see a bit of the city; George, not feeling well, stays behind in the hotel. In Central Park, John totes five-year-old Debbie Fyall, the daughter of a London *Daily Express* reporter following the band, on his shoulder. Above and left, on the train from New York to Washington, D.C., John takes in the scenery, then he and George compare notes on cigarettes.

BETTMANN/GETTY



"TICKET TO RIDE"

For their second tour of the States in 1964, the lads charter a Lockheed Electra from American Flyers Airline to ferry them about. The plane is piloted by company founder Reed Pigman, who brings the group to his ranch in the Ozarks for a few days for a break. The lads go riding and hiking and play board games at night; some of the stewardesses may be present as well. Pigman dies two years later, on April 22, 1966, when the plane pictured here crashes.





"YOU CAN'T DO THAT"

On September 11, 1964, during a one-month tour of the United States and Canada, the Beatles play at the Gator Bowl, in Jacksonville, Florida. The group has been preceded by a hurricane named Dora and winds are still howling. The show almost does not go on. Before the performance, local authorities threaten to segregate the audience, but John, Paul, George and Ringo, appalled by racial friction they have encountered on the tour, say they will only play if the segregation order is withdrawn. Authorities comply. It is said that the Beatles smoke marijuana for the first time on this tour, in New York with Bob Dylan.

CHARLES TRAINOR







MAX SCHELER/K&K/REDFERNS/GETTY



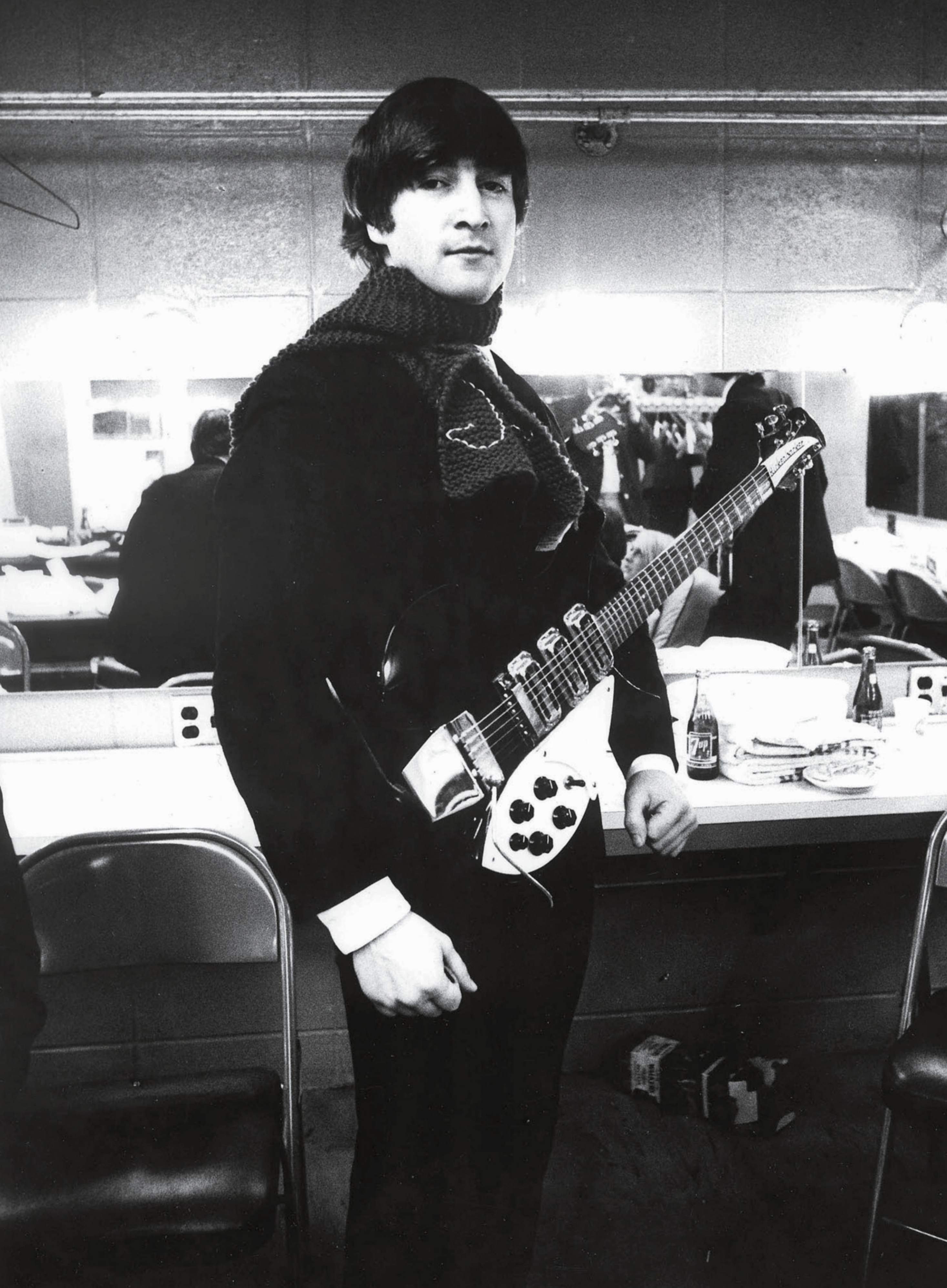
© UNITED ARTISTS/PHOTOFEST

HULTON/GETTY



"A HARD DAY'S NIGHT"

In 1964, the Beatles star in their first film, *A Hard Day's Night*, which director Richard Lester shoots as a typical day in their kaleidoscopic lives. The iconic image above has the band fleeing their fans, very much an everyday, real-world problem. Opposite, top: John with two actresses in a train compartment during shooting; the actress on the left is Pattie Boyd—who meets George while working on the film and later becomes his wife. Opposite, bottom: John and Anna Quayle, who plays a fan, consider his reflection in a mirror. Later in the year, John publishes his first book, *In His Own Write*.





TRENDSETTER

The Fab Four are noted for their role in fashion trends, and in these pictures, all taken in 1964, John tries on a few different looks. At top, that's manager Brian Epstein seated in the background.







I WANNA TAKE YOUR CAP

By the mid-1960s, times are a-changin' for John and the Beatles. He publishes his second book, *A Spaniard in the Works*, in June 1965. The tome is quite Lennonesque, a mélange of puns, wordplay, strange short stories, poems and drawings. In the photo at left, taken during a performance in Rome on June 28 of the same year, a young fan sets his sights on John's trademark hat. Below, a girl attending a Beatles concert at the Cow Palace in Daly City, California, faints and is carried off the stage by security. The Beatles played two shows at the arena, which was the final stop of their 1965 tour.



ART FRISCH/SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE/POLARIS

AP/SHUTTERSTOCK



KEYSTONE PICTURES USA/ALAMY



FRANK HERMAN/GLOBE/CAMERA PRESS/REDUX

"I'D LOVE TO TURN YOU ON"

Opposite: John strikes a pose in an afghan coat and a sporran at the press launch for the Beatles' new album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, held at Brian Epstein's London home. The psychedelic LP comes out on June 1, 1967, in the U.K. and the next day in the States, at a time when drug use by the young is becoming rampant. The Beatles are no exception. John later says he may have taken a thousand LSD trips. Left: John listens to a playback with George Martin, the producer who is essential to *Sgt. Pepper* and so many other albums. The lads don't read or write music using traditional notation, and it is Martin who enables them to properly express themselves. Above: With his son Julian, John shows off his psychedelic Rolls-Royce.



THE INNER SELF

If nothing else, the Beatles are always open to trying anything new . . . or old. Here, in 1967, they meet with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in London as transcendental meditation becomes the order of the day. From the far left, in the glasses, Mal Evans, an assistant to the band; Paul and his girlfriend, Jane Asher, on the sofa; Pattie Boyd, George Harrison's wife; Neil Aspinall, road manager for the Beatles; Paul's brother, musician Mike McCartney; Ringo; John sitting cross-legged on the floor; Ringo's wife, Maureen; and George, at the Maharishi's elbow. In the long run, eastern spirituality seems to suit George better than the others, although all four of them go on a retreat to India the following year.

PHILIP TOWNSEND/CAMERA PRESS/REDUX







MIRRORPIX/GETTY

"THE WALRUS WAS PAUL"

While en route from America to England in April 1967, Paul comes up with the idea for the *Magical Mystery Tour*, an odd, filmed bus sojourn through the English countryside, with occasional music from the four lads. Above, John is captured at the start of the tour. Although

all of the Beatles work on the project, it is clearly Paul at the helm. The movie debuts on BBC-TV on December 26. The critics shred the show, which is unfortunately broadcast in black and white. Paul later says that "it wasn't the greatest thing we'd ever done. I defend it on the lines that nowhere else do

you see a performance of 'I Am the Walrus.'" John gets the first line for the iconic song on an acid trip and the second line comes a week later during another trip. The lyrics also include a reference to the song "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds." John is seen, opposite, on the film's set.

HULTON/GETTY



Robert Whitaker Remembers

After hitting it off with John, a Brit with an eye for portraits becomes the Beatles' official photographer.



ROBERT WHITAKER (3)

In doing portraits, I usually put some objects in the photograph as a point of reference as to who or what the subject is. With him, I put peacock feathers around his head. He loved the idea, then went to see an exhibition I had up at the time. He asked me if I wanted to return to London and work for him." That was the late Bob Whitaker, who died in 2011, describing a day in Melbourne when he was a young English photographer working abroad.

It was 1964 and the subject of the session was not John Lennon or any of the other Beatles, who were on a tour Down Under. It was their manager, peacocky Brian Epstein. At first, Whitaker demurred. "Then Brian said, 'Well, come see the Beatles at Royal Festival Hall.' I got shoved into the orchestra pit, so I was right between the Beatles playing their music and these girls just screaming and fainting away. I couldn't hear a damn thing, but I could see these girls and I thought, 'I suppose I'm missing out on something here.'" Soon, Whitaker was back in London, photographing Cilla Black, Gerry & the Pacemakers and others in Epstein's stable—most prominently, of course, the Beatles.

"I found it actually quite difficult

to become part of the group," recalled Whitaker, the band's official photographer until 1966. "I didn't talk music. Paul seemed to sneer when I'd point a camera his way. Ringo was always a great wit, and could cope fantastically, but we weren't very close. It was John I felt quite at home with, and we got to be very friendly. We'd talk about Dalí or Magritte or other painters. We used to paint together, discussing odd things—the solidity of objects here and in space. I think that one had a bit to do with LSD.

"I found John humorous, warm, very witty. His art—the drawings and poetry—is humorous beyond belief. Very Spike Milligan, but also beautiful. All four were very inventive and spontaneous. On a tour around England in 1964, we were up in Argyllshire at this country house and I asked them to jump up on a wall there. They grabbed these umbrellas, and then John... well, look at him in that photo. He's *levitating*."

“Once I started with them, I realized right away that shooting the Beatles wasn't the sort of work I was used to doing, which was fashion photography, working with photo-montage, other odd things. I think that's why John liked how some of it turned out—it was different.”







ROBERT WHITAKER (3)

“I had been studying the Greek myth of Narcissus, and one day at the Lennons’, I got John to look at his reflection in the water. I had him put a dandelion over his eye. Then I gave John a hoe and Cynthia a mop, and tried to turn them into something very real: pioneers. We shoved a gold spoon into Julian’s hand. I thought the three of them were a fabulous family. I never discussed with John why he left Cynthia.”





Robert Whitaker Remembers



ROBERT WHITAKER (3)



“Portraiture of four Beatles gleaming their white teeth at you bored me senseless. So I was lucky because wherever they were, I was part of the party. I was fascinated to hear them play backstage—this was in Germany, either Hamburg or Essen or Munich—to hear them singing in tune. Onstage, you couldn’t hear a thing. A lot of these photos never ran back then because the papers wanted all four boys: John-Paul-George-Ringo was one person. And a lot of the best moments, of course, had only one Beatle. Or two. Or three. **”**



Robert Whitaker Remembers



ROBERT WHITAKER (3)



“The whiskers were for *Help!* The mask? It was '66. They were prisoners in the Tokyo Hilton but wanted to see things. So merchants brought lacquer boxes, masks, anything Japanese. John's moment with the mask was utterly spontaneous. We were in America—Houston or Minneapolis or Portland—when the cat licked John's nose, and he started stroking it. Very much him. I never saw John as a hard bastard at all. Never saw him bite, or be disrespectful. I miss him a great deal.”

Bob Gruen Remembers

A rock-star photographer takes some of the most iconic images of John and Yoko.



“I didn’t know the Beatles,” says Bob Gruen simply. “I knew John.” Gruen (above, at left) got to know Lennon, along with Yoko, starting in the spring of ’72, when he shot the couple’s backup band, Elephant’s Memory. “We got along really well, and I started spending more time with them. At the time, they were living in Greenwich Village on Bank Street, right near me.

“I found John to be very much as expected—open, witty, perceptive. He would tell these funny one-liners, and I always had a good time with him—a lot of fun. Yoko, too. John would never marry a humorless person, and there was a lot of laughter around them. People ask me what kind of woman Yoko is, and I answer, ‘The kind John Lennon would marry.’”

At the time, Gruen was chronicling the rock scene in New York City, and while he traveled for work, it was Gotham that excited him. “I was macho-proud of New York and was glad John loved the city too. I had a half dozen of the New York T-shirts, and I gave John one. I didn’t give it to him to wear for those photos, I gave it to him a year earlier. He still had it when we made those pictures.

“Later, when he and Yoko were sort of in seclusion, they’d ask me to come uptown to take photos of Sean. John was very protective of Sean as a baby, and those pictures were just for them—they didn’t circulate at the time. (See page 79 for another Gruen image of John and Sean.)

“My pictures of them were spontaneous moments. That’s how it was. Once, a guy in Central Park yelled, ‘When you getting back with the Beatles?’ John yelled back, ‘When you going back to high school?’ When he was ready to come out in public again in 1980, I gave him videos of the newer bands and asked him if he wanted to go to the clubs and see some of them. He said, ‘I’ve been there. Same thing as Hamburg. I know what that’s like.’ He wasn’t one to look back.”

“In 1974 we did the NEW YORK CITY T-shirt shots, with and without the denim jacket. I prefer the one with just the T-shirt, and I think John did as well. It’s my best-known picture. John feeding Sean [below] was taken at the Dakota in November of 1975.”





Bob Gruen Remembers

“These were two house-hunting shots from spring 1973. One is of John and Yoko walking in the rain near Central Park, before taking a first look at the Dakota apartment. The other one is on a pond in Greenwich, Connecticut, at—believe it or not—my former mother-in-law’s house. I had driven them up there in an old station wagon. They bought in the city, of course.”



© BOB GRUEN (2)





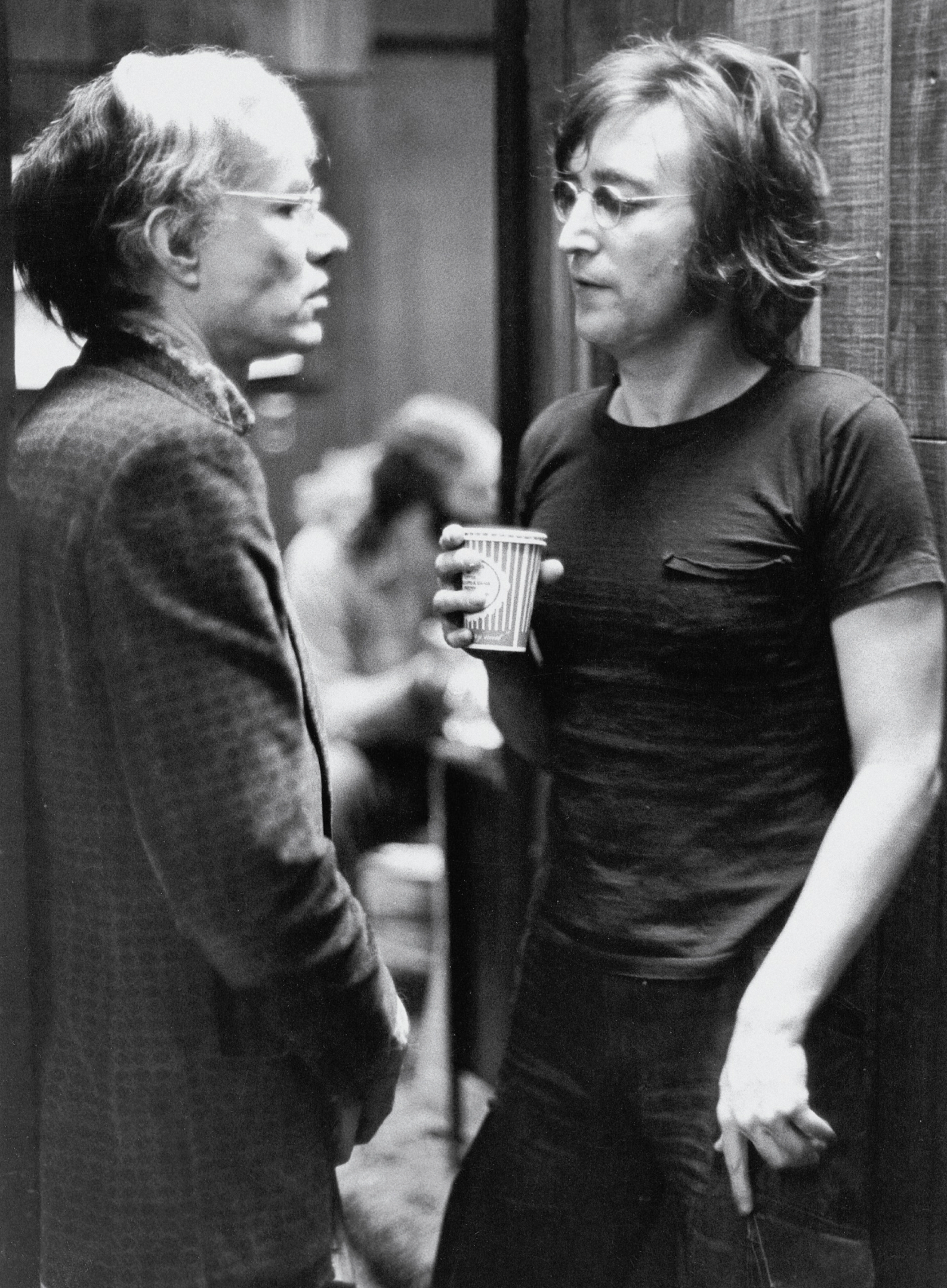
Bob Gruen Remembers



© BOB GRUEN (3)

“John said he loved New York because the artists and creativity of the world were here. He said if it was during the Roman Empire, he’d live in Rome. That’s Elton John on piano at the Record Plant in 1974, and Andy Warhol, same place, in ’72. Phil Spector [in the hat] made an album of John’s benefit concert at Madison Square Garden in 1972.”

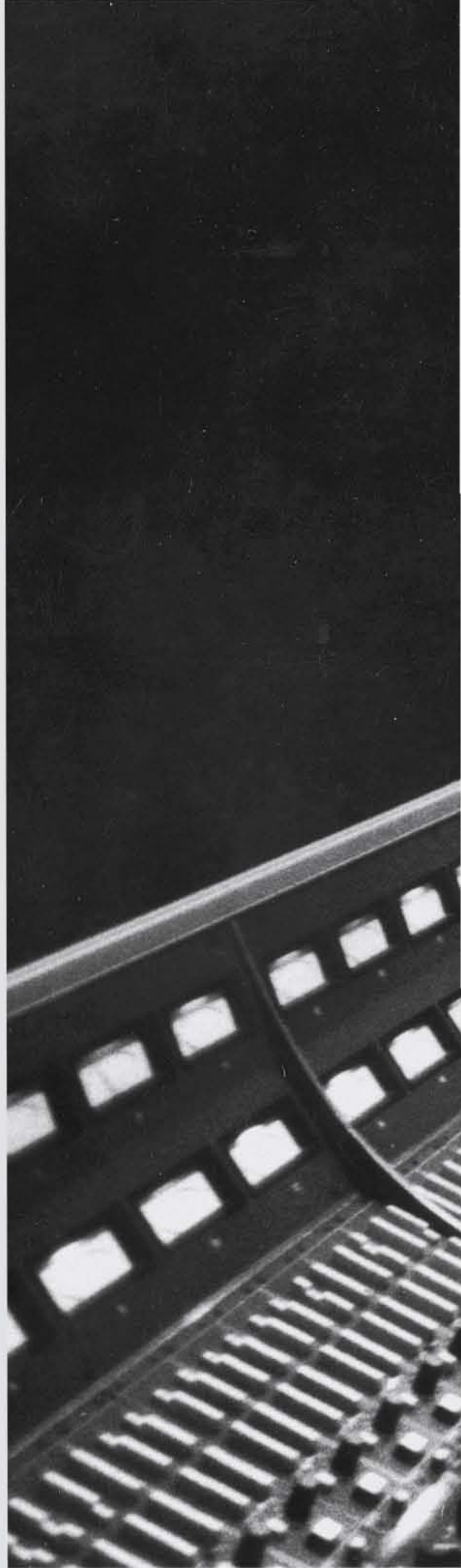




Bob Gruen Remembers



© BOB GRUEN (3)





“They’re dancing at about eight a.m. at the Hit Factory studio in the fall of 1980. They’ve just heard ‘Starting Over’ for the first time on the radio, and after a whole night in the studio, they just started dancing—they were so happy. The others are also from the Hit Factory, the *Double Fantasy* sessions. I love John explaining it all to Sean. He was always looking to the future.”

John & Yoko

The couple is very much in love and, aside from one separation, deeply committed for as long as John lives.





April 10, 1970. The Beatles issue a statement saying, “The world is still spinning and so are we and so are you. When the spinning stops—that’ll be the time to worry. Not before. The Beatles are alive and well and the beat goes on. The beat goes on.”

Well, maybe the beat goes on, but without the Beatles. The message above, is sent through the band’s company, Apple, and is an obituary notice, whether anyone knows it. The most popular and influential group in musical history is on the verge of breaking up. Friction has been increasing for a long time. Harsh words have been exchanged. The otherworldly heat and exposure that comes from being a Beatle is proving too much to handle—especially for John. The regimen of it has become something like school—thus, it is a thing he knows he needs to be free of.

Since the spring of 1968, John has been in love with Yoko Ono, a performance artist he met a couple of years earlier. Seven years his elder, Yoko releases John from the “shackles” of Beatledom. She, more than a maharishi or LSD, opens John’s eyes to a different way of living—one in

which he doesn’t have to hang out with bandmates every day. Instead, he hangs out with her. Barring one breakup that lasts a little over a year, the two become inseparable for as long as John lives.

It is Paul who personally calls for an end to the Beatles in April 1970, tying it to the release of his solo album. But John and Yoko already have released four albums of their own, and George is working on his own musical things. It is all, finally, just so inevitable, even though George and Ringo say at the time that each is confident the group would record together again. This, of course, is not to be.

John’s first post-Beatles LP is *Plastic Ono Band*, an unflinching, brutally honest album that bores deep into his anger, fear and disillusionment. Similar themes are explored on his next record, the classic *Imagine*.

For the remainder of his career, John produces works that are mainly explorations of serious issues: politics, religion, war, and often his complex relationship with his wife, Yoko. Ironically, the music that John frequently turns to for inspiration is the straightforward stuff of his youth. “I like rock’n’ roll,” he once said. “I don’t like much else.”

“COME TOGETHER”

Above left: Producer George Martin, the Beatles and Yoko listen to a tape during the making of the *Let It Be* album. **Opposite:** Yoko and John in 1969. **Previous page:** Photographer David Bailey took this picture, a private commission by John and Yoko, at his house in the Primrose Hill neighborhood of London.





TRINITY MIRROR/MIRROPPIX/ALAMY

THE WEDDING BED

Though Yoko Ono is the daughter of Tokyo bankers and socialites who have relocated to Scarsdale, New York, she and John are clearly compatible. They marry on March 20, 1969, three years after they meet, in Gibraltar in a 10-minute ceremony. For a honeymoon, the couple heads for Amsterdam, where, at right, a weeklong “bed-in” for peace at the Hilton attracts enormous attention. The marriage follows on the heels of another shocker: On March 12, Paul had wed the American photographer Linda Eastman.

DENIS CAMERON/SHUTTERSTOCK







KEYSTONE/GETTY

MIRRORPIX/TOFFOTO





ITS A FAMILY AFFAIR

Above, in Scotland in 1969, John and Yoko happily take a stroll with son Julian and Kyoko, Yoko's daughter with Tony Cox, her second husband. (Cox has custody of Kyoko.) The trip is

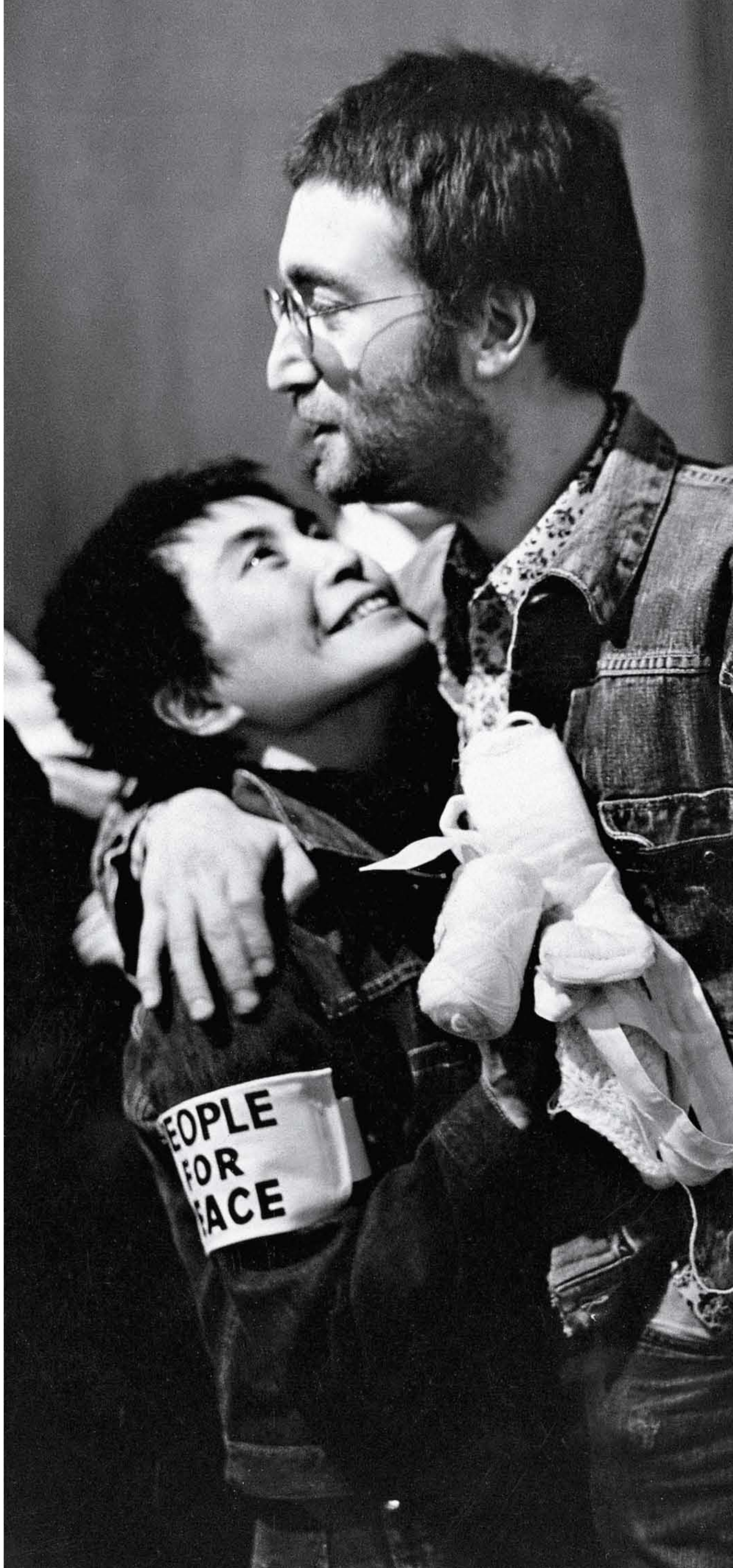
marred by a car accident which leaves John, Yoko and the kids in a hospital for the better part of a week. Opposite: The next year, again on holiday with Kyoko, this time in Denmark, John carries Yoko across the snow.

"LOOK AT ME"

Below, on December 11, 1968, John and Yoko are on the set of *The Rolling Stones: Rock and Roll Circus*, a television project that wouldn't be released until 1996. Fire eaters, clowns and trapeze artists perform, as do the Who, Jethro Tull and the Rolling Stones. John appears with Eric Clapton, Keith Richards and Mitch Mitchell in a supergroup dubbed the Dirty Mac. They sing two songs: a rendition of "Yer Blues" from the *White Album*, then something called "Whole Lotta Yoko," in which Yoko wails and keens as the group backs her. At right, John and Yoko are in London for a performance on the show *Top of the Pops*, February 12, 1970. Opposite: By 1969, the couple has invented Bagism, an art form meant to prevent others from making generalizations based on physical characteristics. Here, John and Yoko engage in Bagism in their home in Greenwich Village, in New York City.



ANDREW MACLEAR/HULTON/GETTY



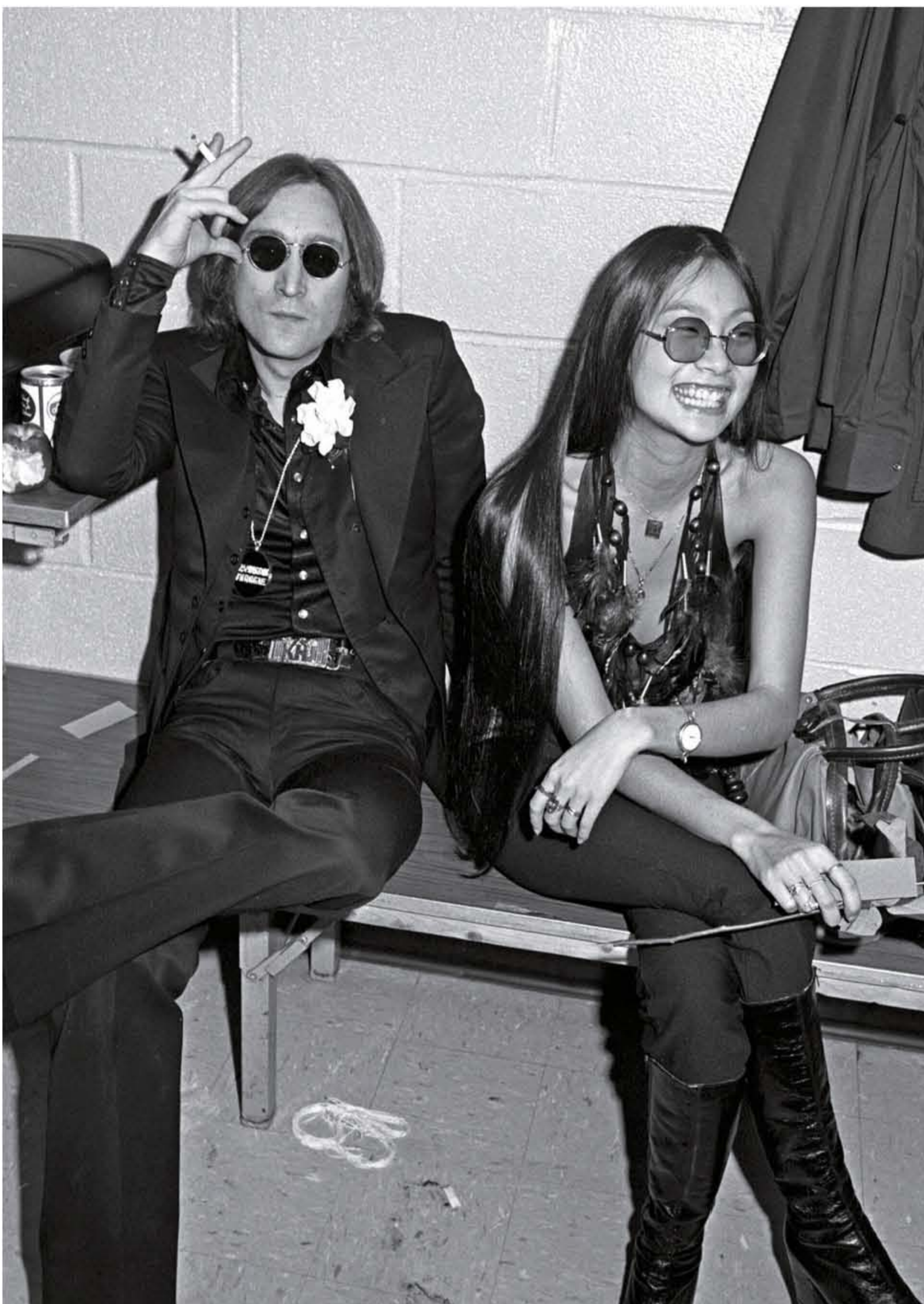


BILL ZYGMAANT/SHUTTERSTOCK

THOMAS MONASTER/NY DAILY NEWS ARCHIVE/GETTY



THOMAS MONASTER/NY DAILY NEWS ARCHIVE/GETTY



"LOVE ME DO"

In 1970, the Beatles break up and just three years later, John and Yoko separate in a period that becomes known as John's "Lost Weekend." During this time, Lennon teams with Elton John to record "Whatever Gets You Thru the Night" and agrees to sing it in public if the song goes to No. 1, which it does. Top: Lennon and John rehearse in New York City before the concert. At left, on November 28, 1974, Lennon is backstage before the performance at Madison Square Garden, with May Pang, his and Ono's former assistant. At this time, Pang is Lennon's companion. At right: Ono, having attended, comes backstage after the concert; three months later, the couple reconciles.







GLOBE/ZUMA

“BEAUTIFUL BOY”

John is now back with Yoko for good, and with the birth of their son, Sean, on October 9, 1975, he becomes a homebody who avoids the music scene. John says he considers Sean his first son, in the sense that he was “a planned child,” although he emphasizes that he loves Julian and always will. Left: Papa John enjoys a quiet moment with his new baby in the Lennon’s apartment in the Dakota, December 12, 1975. Above: John serenades Sean, who as an adult will be a songwriter and musician.

© BOB GRUEN

**"STRAWBERRY FIELDS
FOREVER"**

December 8, 1980. On the way to a studio session, John is stopped outside the Dakota by Mark David Chapman, a longtime "fan." Chapman asks John to sign a copy of the album *Double Fantasy*, which John has released with Yoko. At 10:50 that night, when the couple arrives home, Chapman emerges from the shadows calling out, "Mr. Lennon," and shoots John dead. At right, six days after the killing, mourners gather across the street from the apartment house in Central Park, where John and Yoko often walked with Sean. In 1985, New York City christens a 2.5-acre section of the park Strawberry Fields and a poignant commemorative mosaic is installed (below).



DAVID LEFRANC/GAMMA/RAPHO/GETTY

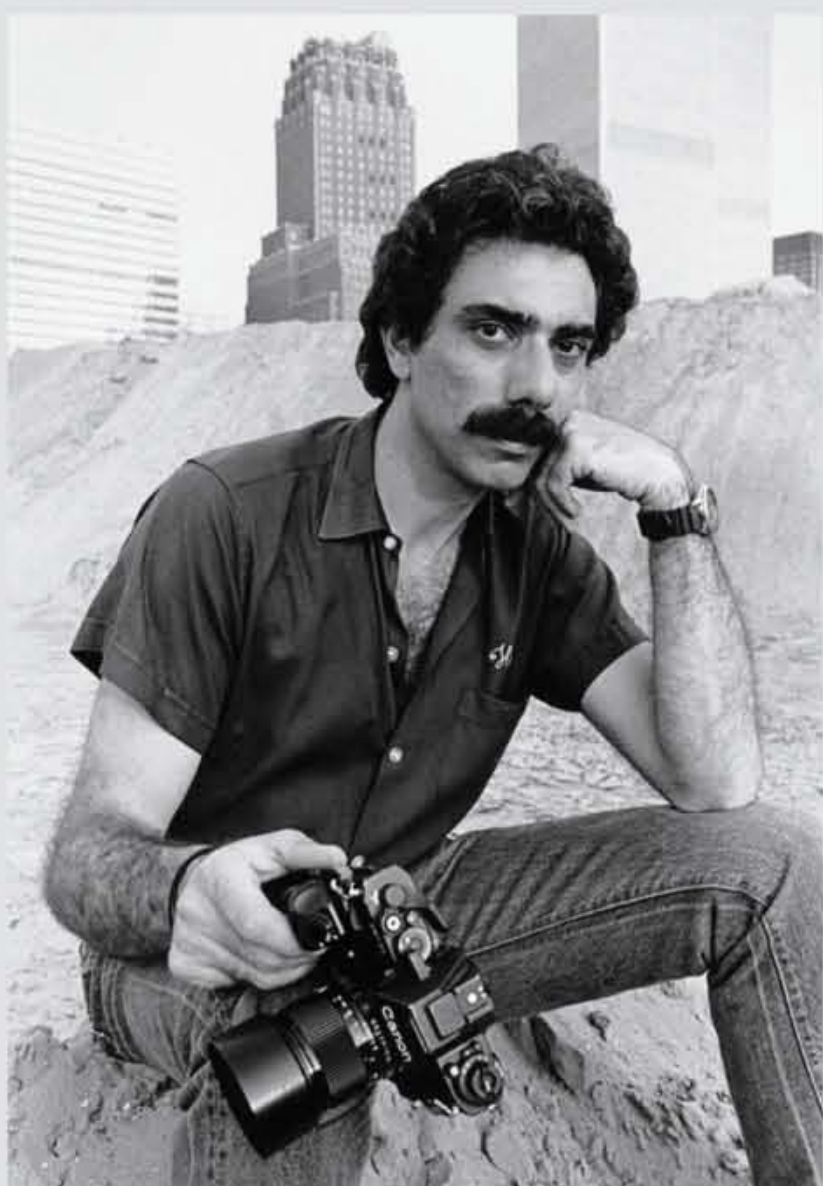


KEN SHERMAN



Allan Tannenbaum Remembers

As John and Yoko emerge from five years of virtual seclusion, they invite a news photographer into their lives.



HARRY MATTISON

He has covered the Intifada in the Middle East and the first Gulf War. He has made *Time* cover photos of the American military figure Oliver North and Israel's Ariel Sharon. He has twice—in 1993 and on September 11, 2001—raced with his cameras from his Manhattan apartment to cover terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center. And yet Allan Tannenbaum (above) says, “Those photos of John and Yoko represent one of the most significant moments not only in my career but in my life. They’re as important to me as any pictures I’ve made.”

That’s because of who Tannenbaum is—what matters to him, what informed his upbringing and philosophy—and because of events that unfolded soon after Tannenbaum’s short but intimate association with John and Yoko began.

“In the ’60s I was a big Beatles and Stones fan,” he says. “I couldn’t decide which band I liked better. With the Beatles, I was a John guy. I liked his style, his humor, especially his outspokenness.” After graduating from college in 1967 with an art degree, Tannenbaum was able to combine

his passions for rock music and photography by shooting the cultural scene, first in San Francisco and then in New York City. Throughout the ’70s he chronicled anything that was happening in the Big Apple—from City Hall to the Mudd Club—for the *SoHo Weekly News*. When he learned, in late 1980, that John and Yoko were about to emerge from five years of virtual seclusion to promote a new album, the *SoHo News* made an overture—and thus began, tentatively at first, a series of photo sessions that yielded a remarkable portfolio. “It all happened over a couple days in late November,” says Tannenbaum. “I reviewed the pictures with John and Yoko because I wanted to make them some prints. John would say, ‘I like this one, I like that one.’ He joked that one of the big problems with the Beatles had been that they all liked different shots best.

“I made prints, and on December 8, I was going to take them up to the Dakota. I was running a bit late when I got the call telling me what had happened. Everything changed right then. Everything.”

“It was a brilliantly sunny fall day and they were being filmed for a video, visiting some of their favorite places in Central Park. John was wearing this silver jacket. I took my still pictures. After we did those shots, we had some coffee and Yoko said, ‘John is comfortable with you.’ So there would be other opportunities.”



ALLAN TANNENBAUM/POLARIS (2)





“In their office in the Dakota they were full of energy and excitement: They were coming out again, they were planning to tour, they were excited. They clearly loved each other, and there was a lot of give and take. Yoko could be businesslike and full of ideas, but John was not at all passive. He’d be playful and humor her, saying, ‘Yes, Mother,’ when she gave directions. That day, I felt like a fly on the wall.”

ALLAN TANNENBAUM/POLARIS (3)

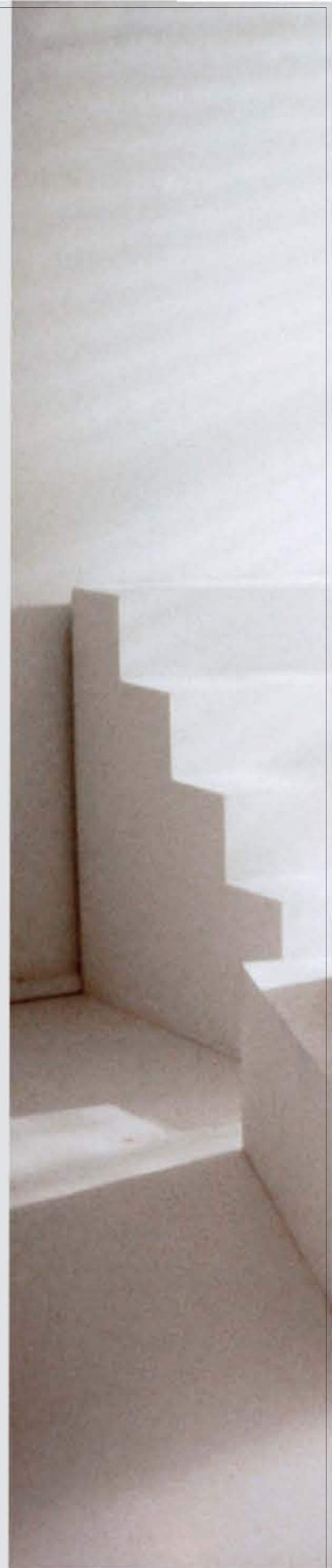
Allan Tannenbaum Remembers



Allan Tannenbaum Remembers



ALLAN TANNENBAUM/POLARIS (3)





“ Our last session was at a downtown studio made to look like their bedroom. I remember going over the shots later with John and he said, ‘You know what I like about your photos? They make Yoko look so beautiful.’ It made me so happy. It still cuts me after all these years—it’s like the blink of an eye. Shocking, just shocking. We lost a real humanist, a cultural icon. And a New Yorker. ”

Harry Benson Remembers

Forced by an editor to accompany the Beatles on their 1964 trip to Paris, a Scottish photojournalist never looks back.



“In Paris they had a beautiful suite in the George V. It had a large living room with a piano, where they’d play and compose. My room down the hall had two big beds. George slept there a few nights as the others were partying so late. John took that picture of me [above] as a Beatle.”

One photographer was there at the beginning, and after the end. Harry Benson (above, between Paul and Ringo) was a native Scotsman working as a young newspaperman on London’s Fleet Street when, “on January 13, 1964, to be exact, the night desk editor called to say I was to go to Paris the next day with a new pop group. I was all packed—had gotten the necessary shots—to leave the next day for Nairobi. Thinking myself a serious photojournalist, I told him, ‘No, thanks,

I’m off to Africa.’ Five minutes later the phone rang again: ‘The editor says you are going to Paris.’”

Harry did go to France where he covered, first, a performance at the Cyrano Theatre in Versailles. “I had to go out to my car to get batteries for my strobe. When I got back inside the hall, I heard the strains, ‘Close your eyes and I’ll kiss you, tomorrow I’ll miss you . . .’ It was the first Beatles’ song I’d ever heard, and it was sensational. The moment I heard them, I knew I was in the right place.”





Harry Benson Remembers



“On the Pan Am plane on February 7, 1964, everyone was excited yet apprehensive about coming to America. It had been just over two months since JFK was assassinated, and that was very much on their minds. Eerily, John said that he feared an Ivy League guy in

a suit would try to kill him. It was the first trip to America for John and Cynthia, who were subdued on the plane. John and George took pictures to pass time. I was the fifth person off the plane. I had asked them to turn around and wave. Ringo remembered and made

the others turn. I didn't bother to develop the film until about 15 years later. I'm glad I finally did, as it was an historic day. After New York, we took the train to Washington. Someone made Cynthia wear a black wig [opposite, bottom], ostensibly so fans wouldn't



PHOTOGRAPH © HARRY BENSON 1964 (3)

mob her. She was actually kept aside so as not to hurt John's image. The Beatles were desperate to succeed, and Cynthia was a casualty of that agenda. She never rode in the limo, always followed in the second car. It was sad. ”



Harry Benson Remembers



PHOTOGRAPH © HARRY BENSON 1966



PHOTOGRAPH © HARRY BENSON 1967



PHOTOGRAPH © HARRY BENSON 1980



“ In 1966, when Lennon’s ‘We’re more popular than Jesus Christ’ interview was published in America, all hell broke loose. I found out John would be giving a press conference in Chicago. After his public apology, I found him in his hotel room, smoking, almost in tears. ‘Why couldn’t I keep my big mouth shut?’ In 1980, when I heard that John had been shot, I was stunned like everyone

else. For a short part of my life, he had been a friend. Many fans gathered in Central Park on December 14 to mourn the loss of their idol. For a moment a sign with a photograph of John and the word *Why?* arose from the crowd. Then it was gone. Much later, in 1987, it was arranged that I would take pictures of Mark David Chapman for a magazine article. It was

in Attica, a grim old prison. The editor told Chapman of my history with the Beatles. Touching my arm, he said, ‘I want to apologize to you for killing your friend.’ But then, when I was photographing him, the last thing he did was put a finger to his temple like he was holding a revolver. All in all—thinking back—it seemed like one incredible hour with a madman. **”**





Harry Benson Remembers

“ I had heard many things about Yoko Ono, of course, but we had never met before I first photographed her and Sean in 1985. When I photographed them at the Imagine Circle in Central Park, she told me that she and Sean had to go on living—John would have wanted it that way. I found her to be a charming, intelligent woman—and it was easy to see why John had been in love with her. I hadn’t met her earlier because, you see, I wasn’t a rock ‘n’ roll photographer. I had covered the Beatles as a news story, a phenomenal news story. I remember, by the time they got to Boston for their performance at Suffolk Downs racetrack on August 18, 1966, the world-weariness had set in. John remarked that they had seen America from inside hotel rooms and from looking out of car windows. It was obvious they would not do any more world tours and, afterwards, I went my own way, and they went theirs. The last time I saw John was in the late ‘60s in New York’s Bryant Park. He was at a peace rally protesting the Vietnam War, where he said, ‘All we are saying is: Give peace a chance.’ ”

PHOTOGRAPH © HARRY BENSON 1985

Lads Will Be Lads



PHOTOGRAPH © HARRY BENSON 1964

Every life is made up of moments—quiet ones, raucous ones, moments long sought and moments too quickly past. It could be said that this bedroom romp is the moment for all four of the Beatles—certainly for John, who ever since hearing “Heartbreak Hotel,” has desperately wanted the golden ring. Harry Benson is

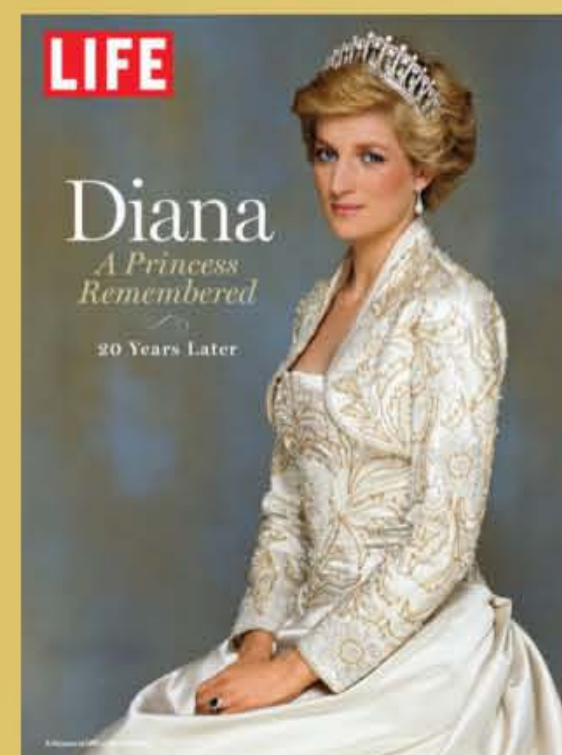
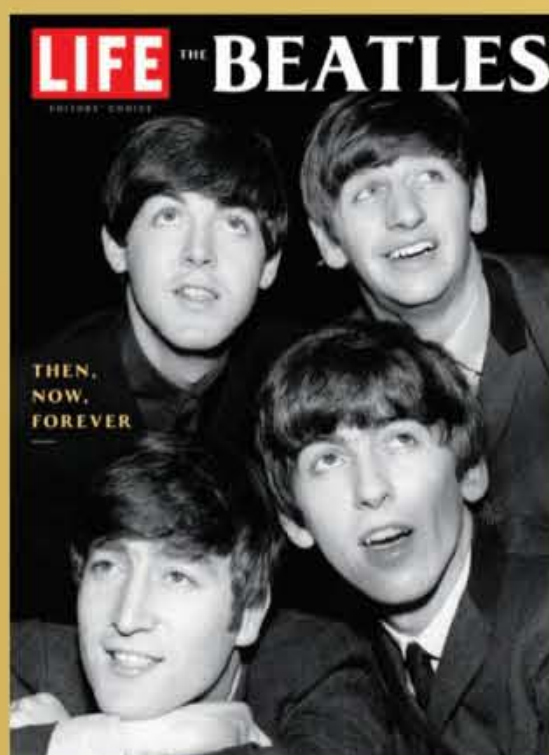
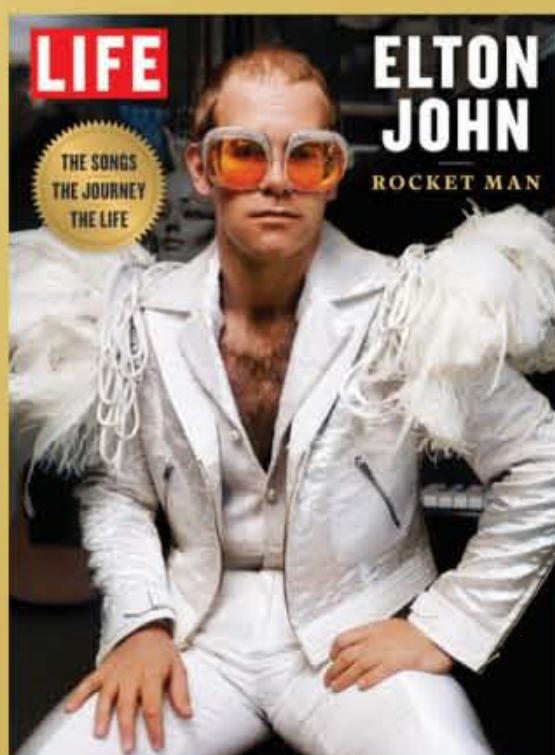
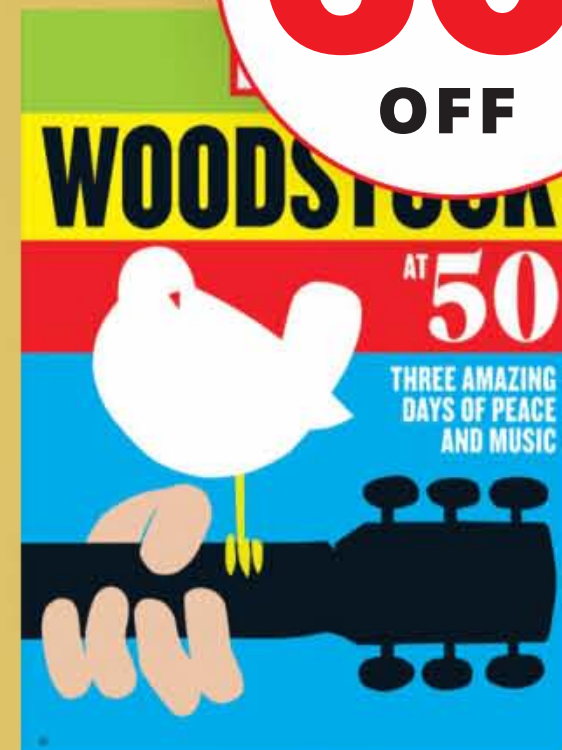
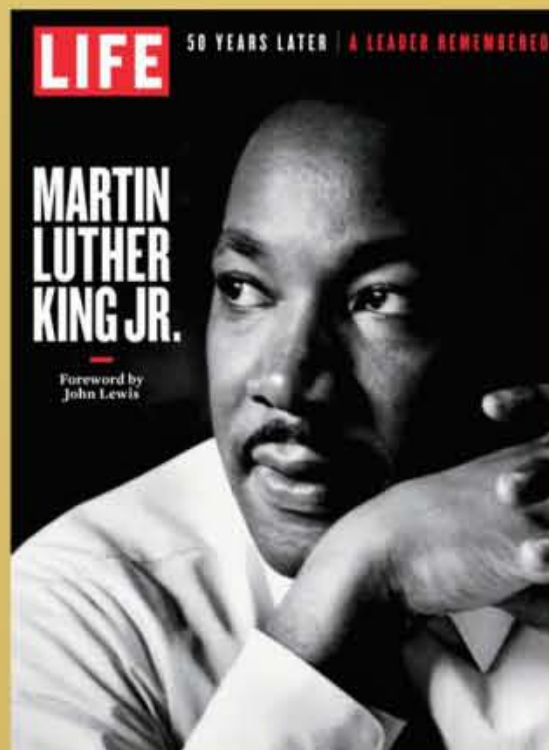
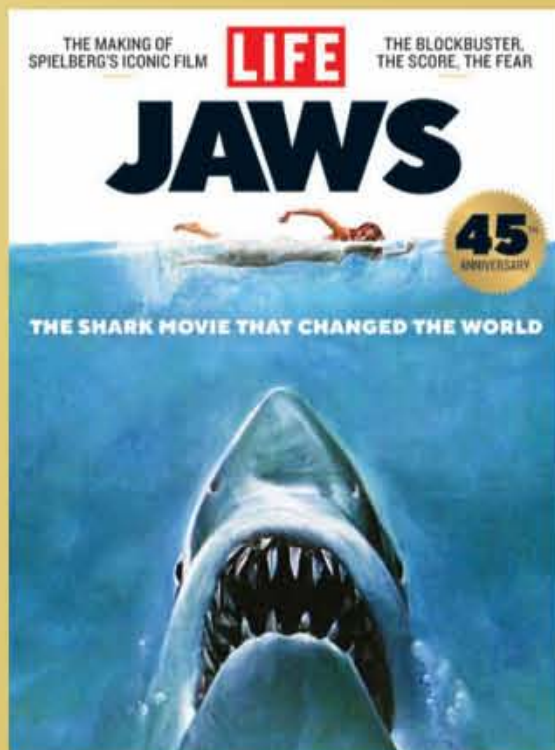
there that night, too, at the George V hotel in Paris, and tells LIFE: “It was late, and Brian Epstein came in with a cable to tell them ‘I Want to Hold Your Hand’ was No. 1 on the American charts, and that they were going to America to be on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. They were obviously excited by the news. I had heard

them talk about a pillow fight they had had earlier, and I suggested one that night. Three said O.K., but John said no—that would be childish and stupid. So that was that. Then John casually came up behind Paul, who was holding a drink in his hand, and whacked him across the head. That was when the fun began.”

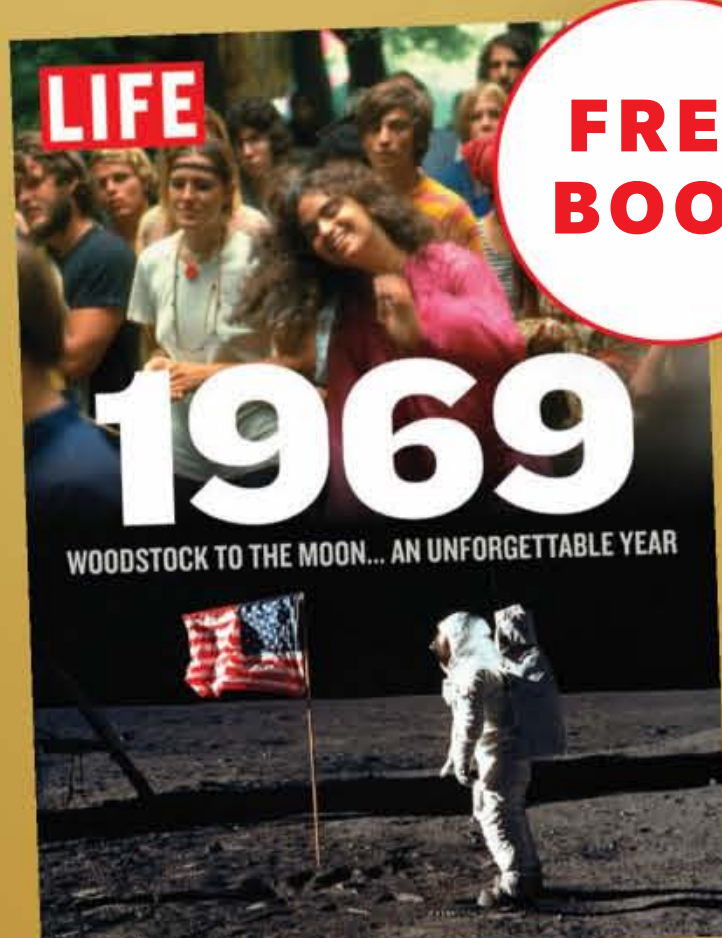
LIFE

Experience the Stories of a Lifetime

SAVE
60%
OFF



Become a Charter Subscriber Now!



**FREE
BOOK**

As a Charter Subscriber, you get the LIFE Editors' Choice Special Issues – the best-of-the-best delivered right to your door. The biggest events, the most enduring stars, the topics that touch us. To see LIFE. To see the world ... **all for the lowest price anywhere, guaranteed.**

Plus we'll rush you an exclusive book you can't buy in stores ...
ABSOLUTELY FREE!

Claim your Charter-Subscriber savings now, while you still can.
Go to LIFE.com/NOW

#200555

Rooftop, in 1974

